



*Office of Public Affairs
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Statement of William McCormick, Ambassador-Designate to New Zealand
and Samoa, before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States
Senate
September 22, 2005

Chairman Lugar, Ranking Member Biden, and distinguished members of
this committee:

I would like to thank Senators Gordon Smith and Ron Wyden for their friendship and support, and for the outstanding job they do representing the great state of Oregon. My wife, Gail, is with me today, and I am grateful for her encouragement. Unfortunately, our children are scattered across the globe at various schools and could not be here today. However, my ten-year-old son is excited at the possibility of a second summer vacation beginning in December -- although I confess that Gail and I have not yet introduced him to the concept of summer school.

It is a privilege and an honor to appear before you today as you consider my nomination to be Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa. I am deeply grateful that President Bush has nominated me for this important post. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working closely with this committee and others in Congress to strengthen our relationships with New Zealand and Samoa as we advance American interests in the Pacific.

New Zealand is a close friend of the United States. We share a common language, common elements of history and culture, and a commitment to democratic principles and human rights. We have a common goal of a world that is stable, peaceful, prosperous, and democratic. New Zealand may be small in population but is generous in spirit. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Government of New Zealand

contributed over 1.4 million dollars to the American Red Cross for hurricane relief and offered to send search and rescue and forensic teams to assist in the rescue effort. Our Embassy in Wellington and Consulate-General in Auckland were flooded with requests and offers of help from private citizens, who have also given generously to the relief effort. One woman from New Zealand was instrumental in setting up a website to help those affected by Hurricane Katrina reunite with separated family and friends; it contains the names of more than 300,000 people.

This tradition of friendship and generosity gives our bilateral relationship a familial quality that in my case is more than a figure of speech. My family ties to New Zealand go back over 30 years. As many of you know, I am in the seafood business. For many years I had friendly and productive business relationships with New Zealand and other APEC economies through our former seafood importation and distribution division. I understand the value of strong personal and professional relationships and, if confirmed, I will strive to expand our friendship based on promoting our mutual prosperity, mutual security, and respect.

The United States and New Zealand have worked together to foster a stronger and more open international trading system that is critical to guaranteeing our mutual prosperity. New Zealand has demonstrated vision and leadership in its support for global free trade. Its courageous liberalization of its trade policies in the 1980s achieved significant gain after a painful period and has earned New Zealand a prominent leadership role in the World Trade Organization and other economic fora. We have worked together trying to craft agreements that would break down barriers to free trade in agriculture and in industrial trade, important steps in putting the Doha Round back on track. At stake is the prospect of all countries -- developed and developing -- to grow their economies and help their citizens raise their standards of living. That our countries share this goal should come as no surprise because we both benefit from liberalized trade. Our bilateral trade is also significant: In 2004 New Zealand sent NZ\$4.3 billion worth of goods to the US, and we sent just a little less in return.

Our mutual interests include cooperation on many global issues, including trafficking in persons, human rights, assistance to refugees, as well as cooperation in science and technology, oceans and fisheries, and the environment. We share New Zealand's interest in "ocean governance," including protection of deep sea biodiversity and protection of seamounts

from over-exploitation. In July of this year our Bilateral Climate Change Partnership announced three joint projects aimed at enhancing the exchange of scientific data to aid in the efficient management of ecosystems. This is part of our ongoing cooperation on climate-change issues. In addition, since 1961 New Zealand and the United States -- along with other signatories to the Antarctica Treaty -- have worked together to ensure that Antarctica remains an international preserve for science and peace.

As with most relationships, New Zealand and the United States have their differences. Our differences with New Zealand over nuclear-powered vessels and its continued effect on our security relationship are well known. Although the United States and New Zealand are no longer treaty allies, we recognize New Zealand's continuing contributions to Operation Enduring Freedom, participation in the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan, and its contributions to Iraq reconstruction. We continue to value New Zealand's contributions to peacekeeping and stability operations around the globe, most notably in East Timor and the Solomon Islands. We are encouraged by New Zealand's recent investments in its Long-Term Defense Development Plan. Our two countries also work closely together on other international security issues, including nonproliferation, money laundering, and terrorist financing.

If confirmed, I will maintain a sense of perspective on the relationship while continuing to discuss our differences. As my friend, Ambassador Swindells, noted in his farewell speech last July, "the foundation stone of any friendship is surely the willingness to move beyond past grievances and to see things as they are now, without echoes of past difficulties impeding progress." For that reason, I believe there is no more important time in U.S.-New Zealand relations than the present to foster greater understanding, mutual respect, and a sense of common interests and common ideals.

The United States has always enjoyed excellent relations with Independent Samoa. Although we did not open an embassy until 1988, close ties have existed for many years. Cultural and family ties link Samoa and its close neighbor, American Samoa; and the U.S. has had an official presence in Independent Samoa since the establishment of a Peace Corps program in 1967. The Peace Corps remains active in Samoa, where it provides educational and technical assistance and a bridge of friendship and cultural understanding.

The United States is a member of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), which is headquartered in Apia, Samoa. As such, we channel funding through that organization for sustainable development initiatives throughout the Pacific region. U.S. representatives to SPREP have enjoyed an excellent rapport with their Samoan and New Zealand counterparts.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed by the Senate, I will be responsible for managing our relationship with two close Pacific friends and a key trade ally. I am proud to have been nominated as Ambassador to New Zealand and to Samoa and intend to do my best to expand our excellent relations with both nations. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress and our interagency team in Wellington, Auckland, and Apia, as well as here in Washington, to further our important interests in New Zealand and in Samoa.